Interview with Ms. Phyllis Freeman

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program

Foreign Service Spouse Series

PHYLLIS FREEMAN

Interviewed by: Hope Meyers

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Q: This is Hope Meyers. I'm about to interview Mrs. Fulton Freeman at my home.... The date is October 20, 1986.

FREEMAN: I was so happy to have a family because my family...my mother went to the hospital when I was ten years old, and from that time I was sent here, sent there.

Q: Where was this?

FREEMAN: Well, Father taught at Phillips Academy for thirty years.

Q: Where did you and Tony meet?

FREEMAN: Well, when I got out of college I went with my roommate to New York. I thought New York would be a wonderful place. She was going into the field of design and she wanted to get into Macy's training school. That would be fun. So I went with her. Of course, I didn't get the job because I wasn't convinced, myself, that I wanted it. Shortly after that, about two or three weeks, I couldn't wait to get out of New York. I just couldn't wait.

It was really kind of a blessing because my father was quite ill then, declining with heart disease, and he'd always wanted me to come home and be his hostess and run the house. I had seen too many old maid aunts in Andover, and I wasn't about to be caught in that situation. But I went home and was perfectly happy to stay there for awhile. I stayed about a year and a half, I guess. But during my college years...

Q: Where did you go to college?

FREEMAN: St. Lawrence, in Canton, New York. That's where my father had gone. I wanted to go to Wellesley but he thought that I couldn't work and get through Wellesley. And he also felt I needed a balance. I graduated from Bradford, which is a girls' school, and I think he thought I needed to learn to have a social life as well as...but I did have to work...and he felt that if I went to Wellesley I wouldn't have any fun, and that I'd just be working all the time. I didn't really like St. Lawrence that much because it was so isolated up in the north country, and I missed going to the symphony with Daddy. I don't know; it was just a different kind of life. I worked every summer at the Lake Placid Club.

In my junior year I met William Starr Meyers, who was a professor at Princeton in political science. He spent his summers up there lecturing to all the idle rich and old ladies on the political problems of the day, and he wrote a lot of books, vitriolic books against Roosevelt, and I proofread his Hoover papers that summer. You see, he felt that if my father was a professor at Andover, ipso facto I was bright.

Q: What did your father teach?

FREEMAN: Mathematics. And so he asked me if I would proofread in my free time. I evidently did a very good job proofreading the book, and there were very few errors. Then after working for a year in Andover, I got a telephone call from him saying he needed a secretary and he thought of me. He was writing books and wanted me to work in his home in Princeton, and would I come to Princeton. That was my ticket to paradise because...I

didn't want to stay home and get into what I considered to be a dead end for me. Of course, my father said I could go, but it was hard on him because by this time I was taking care of him, and I was working, and my grandmother was dying of cancer in a Boston hospital. All of this going on at the same time.

But anyway, Dr. Meyers asked could I do shorthand? And I lied through my teeth and said certainly. And he said, “When can you come, next month or next week?” And I said, “No, I can't possibly come until October 1.” I guess this was in June. Well, he was very disappointed but he would wait for me. I went right to night school and got my shorthand. My first dictation was in political science vocabulary. My shorthand was about as limited as “Yours in the first instance.” So, after about an hour and a half of dictation, I was getting absolutely panicked. He said, “Now go home. You've done enough for today.” Well, I couldn't have gone home; I had to read whatever it was there. I always said it was my book. But he never changed it too much. Anyway, I got better after a while, and you get used to somebody's vocabulary, so I had my own shorthand. It certainly was no longer anything that I had got in school.

Then he wanted his library catalogued. Well, then I sort of had to learn how you catalogue a library, and I'm sure that wasn't done very well, but I did it all, cross-filing and all that sort of thing.

And in the meantime on Sundays...oh, I earned enough money to pay for my room, and then I had to eat all of my meals out, and one of the thrills of my lifetime was saying good morning to Einstein every day, or almost every day, as he was on his way to the — what's the institution?

Q: Institute for Advanced Studies.

FREEMAN: Anyway, I got into a routine and I found out that I could live on my money if I didn't eat three dinners a week, so then I thought, well I'd better get some dates. Eventually I had enough friends there, but it was tough going. Sundays the Meyers always

held open house for the graduate students and that was part of my job, to serve tea and sandwiches, and that also was my Sunday meal, I might add. They were just darling to me and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I didn't meet Tony until February.

Q: He was there as a student?

FREEMAN: He was there as a student but he was always off somewhere; I don't think he ever came to those things.

Q: Was he Professor Meyers' student?

FREEMAN: I don't think so. I don't really remember. Professor Meyers taught beginning political science and government, and he wanted me to attend class and take down his new ideas and his new notes. Well, they didn't change at all. I think that was one of my biggest disillusions. Here was somebody who had taught for 30 years and picked a living subject. Well, if you've got to talk about 1775 that's fixed, but past that it was pretty fixed in cement. I never really saw him when he was working with graduate students, but these were maybe undergraduate students.

Tony was in the — what was the school? Anyway, he was there as a graduate student in political science. I kept hearing about him and everybody said, “You've got to meet Tony.” Well, after he left college, he'd been going with a girl for a long time, and her father insisted that if Tony married this girl, he had to live next door and go into the family company in Texas. I'm sure that that's what finished it more than anything, as Tony was already headed for the Foreign Service.

Q: I wanted to ask you about that, of course.

FREEMAN: Tony went to Pomona where Dr. Edmunds was President. He had been President of Lingnan University. On the bulletin board at Pomona was a notice about exchange students to Lingnan and the first Japanese-American student conference in

Japan. The exchange, by the way, is still going on. So Tony went to the conference and then on to Lingnan for one academic year.

Q: He had already been there?

FREEMAN: No, he was an exchange student in his Junior year.

Q: Yes, but he'd already been there when you met him?

FREEMAN: Oh, yes. When the year in Canton was coming to an end, he wrote his mother and said, “I've already been across the Pacific, Mother. I'd like to bicycle to the Olympics and come home that way.” They were in Germany that year. So, three boys started out from Canton and bicycled all through Indochina, Bali, Java, Sumatra. (Tony knew the name of every place where there was any fighting during the Vietnam War.) It was an incredible trip when you think about it. They bicycled all the way to Lucknow, India, where they got awfully tired of bicycling through India. By that time they would throw their bicycles up on an overhead rack on a train and ride at night. There they bought a car and they drove across several deserts to Athens, whereupon he became very, very ill. The other boys went on to the Olympics and then home, but Tony spent something like four months in Athens in a hospital.

Q: Who took care of him?

FREEMAN: Peggy. His sister, who graduated from nursing school in Montreal, Canada, was sent by Tony's parents on a boat to get Tony, but this was four months later and he was just a wraith. He had already been pronounced dead several times. An interesting thing is that the only duplication on our wedding list was the Consul in Athens who took care of Tony. He was somebody that Daddy had been very fond of in Andover and had tutored him while he was attending Andover.

Q: And you didn't find that out until then?

FREEMAN: No, we didn't realize, and by that time maybe Daddy had lost track. I found that an interesting coincidence.

So Tony came back. He'd lost a whole year of school, and he lost three ribs. It took him quite a while to come back from this illness, and they never were quite sure what it was that he had had.

Q: Sounds terrible.

FREEMAN: Everything was in French in the hospital, and no papers came home with him, so this all became a little bit nebulous as far as the medical knowledge of what he'd gone through. When he came to Princeton with his right-hand drive car, he was quite a character. He'd been around!

Q: Around the world certainly.

FREEMAN: So, I finally met him, and from the minute we met, that was it. I mean it went like a spiral. I had been going with a boy for years. It was one of those things that everybody knew that I was going to marry him. But there again, I was trying to get away. I wanted to be...I wasn't sure. But I knew I was sure when I met Tony.

Q: And had he already taken the Foreign Service exam?

FREEMAN: Oh, he was going to get his Master's at Princeton and his family was furious because...

Q: Where was Tony from?

FREEMAN: He was from Pasadena, California. His father was the Presbyterian minister — a very well known Presbyterian minister, and of course they wanted him to get his Master's degree before he went into the Foreign Service. A friend of his at Cal Tech was a very close friend of the family and Tony knew him very well so Tony went to him for advice.

What should he do? He wanted to go into the Foreign Service, and so he was told that he really should go to Princeton, and that he needed maturing. But Tony then wanted to marry me, and nothing was going to stop him, and I'm sure I didn't help. Tony finished his one year at Princeton and went to Washington, met Chuck Burrows, roomed with him, and that's how our friendship began with Chuck. We were married in October. The family finally accepted that there was nothing they could do about that, and the next March 8th we were in the Foreign Service.

Q: As quickly as that...

FREEMAN: Tony passed his exams and we went back to Pasadena and got married. We went to Pasadena because my father was on a sabbatical, and he'd always planned to go to California to lie in the sunshine. The family doctor said, “Phyllis, if you let your father put on a wedding...” He was my mother, very much my mother. Putting on the wedding was a job that he could do beautifully. The flowers would be perfect. The doctor said, “If he does that, that'll be the end. His heart won't take it.” So we talked Daddy into saying, “Okay, if you're going to California, I'll meet you there.” That's where Tony's family is and we want to be married by Tony's father. My father would have nothing to do, just come to the wedding. So that's what happened and people at home never did understand.

There were 1500 people at my wedding and I knew just a few of them. Well, here is a very favorite minister, and one of the favorite children of the minister. I had a choir of 50 children with candles going down ahead of me. It was a gorgeous wedding. Just gorgeous. But, you know, Robert Freeman was the minister, Robert Guthrie Freeman was the best man, David Freeman was an usher, Peggy Freeman was the maid of honor, and Zoe Beth Freeman was the flower girl. It's the funniest newspaper article you've ever read but that didn't matter to me at all. But my father collapsed after the wedding and they never told me. I was so upset about that.

Q: Did you go immediately then to...

FREEMAN: Well, then Tony found out that he'd passed the written [examination]. We were married before we found that out, but nothing could stop us. He was going back to school at Stanford to finish his Master's, and I was going to support him by getting a job. We went up there and picked out the cutest little doll house under an oak tree. We were going ahead with those plans because we didn't have any nickels and nobody was giving us very much. My father couldn't, and, as I said, we'd made our decision so we had to do something about it. But then he passed so we went to Washington for the oral exams. We drove across the continent with our goods and chattels in a swivel-wheel trailer — that was a good trip. I think his date was Monday morning on the 3rd day of January. Then I think we heard — well, I think he knew really that he'd passed the orals at that point, but not officially — that came fairly shortly. Then we had to sit and wait for a job.

On March 8th we heard the assignments were finally coming out. We were all packed. We had our little swivel-wheel trailer and a funny apartment on 13th Street and our things were ready. So the minute that letter came — that morning we finished packing, drove to the State Department and I sat in the car while he went in and signed the papers, and we left for our post.

Q: Which was?

FREEMAN: Mexico City.

Q: I hadn't realized that was your first.

FREEMAN: I don't know what we'd have done if it had said we were going to Cuba.

Q: What about Spanish?

FREEMAN: Maybe we got a letter that said we were going to Mexico; we must have had to know something. Oh, well Tony took Spanish in 8th grade and he knew every grammar rule there was, but I didn't know a word. I came from New England where French was...if

you learned anything, you learned French. In Mexico Tony just couldn't understand how the cook could understand me. He used to shake his head over me. But I was learning. I spoke miserably. Every language I spoke miserably, but I communicated.

Q: What was his assignment there?

FREEMAN: In those days every Foreign Service Officer went out to a first post contiguous to the United States — Canada, Cuba, Mexico. I don't know how many more places there were but they were all in embassies, I think. The new Foreign Service Officers spent a month in Visas, a month in the Political Section, etc. The embassies were very good about that. Tony spent a lot longer in the Consular area than he did in the upper echelons of the Political Section, but all new recruits had to learn all facets of the Foreign Service. Then they came back to school in Washington. Now, you see, they go to school before they go out in the field, but then they go out on a permanent assignment. We were just out a year and came back to Washington. He was not considered a Foreign Service Officer until he'd finished school. He could have been dropped at anytime up until then. I think the school was three months long.

Q: That must have made it difficult moving backwards and forwards.

FREEMAN: Oh, it was very interesting. By this time I had a baby. I wanted to have a child as fast as possible because it was the only thing I could think of to give my father. He saw her and loved her before he died. That's why I got pregnant so fast, and I was the brunt of all the jokes in Mexico City because a week after I missed my period I went to the doctor, sat in the office, and he said, “Lady, you aren't pregnant. Come back in a month.” I said, “No, I'm sure if you examine me you'll find I'm pregnant.” He examined me and said, “You're six weeks pregnant.” I said, “No, I'm one week pregnant.” (I was right.) And he said, “Well, I wouldn't know. I couldn't tell if you were one week pregnant. You're at least six weeks pregnant.” That night we went to a cocktail party, and I told everyone I was

pregnant. I was so excited about it. I was the funniest thing that came down the pike. I'll never forget that.

Q: So, with baby and trailer you returned to Washington?

FREEMAN: No. We sold the car for $50.00 and a gun. It would have been impossible to take the baby in that open car. It was a car that had tires in the fender well — very chic looking. Ours was a 4-door touring car and it was in Night Must Fall and several other movies. Tony earned money while he was in college by renting the car to movie companies.

Q: For reimbursement...

FREEMAN: Right. For different movies, and Night Must Fall was a very famous one. No, we came back by boat. That was a trip! First by train from Mexico City, down to Vera Cruz and then by boat. I remember the cabin: you couldn't turn around in it, that kind of thing. And we got to Cuba. Then we finally got to New York.

Q: How long did it take?

FREEMAN: I don't remember. I know the baby was awfully sick from diarrhea — I'm sure from all the changing of everything — but she survived. Then we had to stay in Washington — everybody else went out on assignment by about the first of April, but since language school didn't open in Peking — the Chinese language school — we were kept in Washington until September.

It was interesting how Tony got his assignment out of school, which I'm sure wouldn't happen today. Everybody was waiting to see his name go up on the bulletin board with his assignment, and eventually each person received his assignment, and Tony's name remained absolutely blank. When he first came to Washington to take the written, he went to the State Department, called on the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs,

and said, “I want to know how long it will take me to become a Chinese language officer after I pass the exams.” And, of course, the Assistant Secretary, who was Max Hamilton, said, “You just come back and see me after you've passed the exams.” So the minute Tony passed the exams, the first thing he did when he got back to Washington was to go and say, “Well, I passed the exam,” and he [Hamilton] said, “Wait until you pass the orals.” Tony passed the orals and went right back up to the Far Eastern division.

Q: How had he acquired this interest? Having been there?

FREEMAN: He was an exchange student in the Lingham University, and he spoke Cantonese. On his orals he put down Cantonese, and the State Department had to really hustle to find somebody to give him the exam. (That's a wonderful story that Jim Penfield will be glad to tell you about.) Anyway, he got 99 on his Cantonese exam. So then Tony was getting really nervous and he'd come home and say, “I don't understand.” Then we got an invitation from Max Hamilton, Assistant Secretary of State, for dinner at his home.

At the dinner there was much joking about how difficult it was to get with the China service, but at the end of the dinner Max Hamilton got up to give a toast, and to our great surprise and excitement he said, “We're gathered here tonight to bring in a new member, and give Tony his assignment to the Far East — to China, in Peking.” I tell you, it was incredible. I mean, here we were, just nine months into our foreign service.

Q: Extraordinary. I'm sure nobody else ever was given an assignment that way.

FREEMAN: That's right, but it was because this boy, not yet a man even, kept going right straight to the top and saying, “I want to be a Chinese language officer.”

Q: You remember who else was there?

FREEMAN: Max Hamilton said, “We never have ever sent anybody as the Chinese language officer who hasn't at least been in the Foreign Service for a year.” But they never

regretted it. Tony was the first Foreign Service Officer as an interpreter to ever present the credentials of an American Ambassador. I mean, they always had a Chinese do it. And Time Magazine called him “Fulton Faultless Freeman” You know how Time Magazine always had an adjective for everybody.

Q: How old were you and he then?

FREEMAN: Twenty-three when we were married. About 25 when we got to Peking.

Q: How did you go there?

FREEMAN: We had one child. She was still a baby and I guess she was still on the bottle because we had that stupid sterilizer that we all used — those baby bottles went in and you had to steam them for 15 minutes and the nipples would get too soft. Anyway, I carried that to the ship's kitchen.

Q: How long did it take to make that crossing?

FREEMAN: Eighteen days, I think.

Q: Where did you land?

FREEMAN: We stopped in Yokohama and the Niles Bonds were there ahead of us because they'd gotten their assignment a good three months ahead of us.

Q: That's what I wanted to ask you about. Do you think that as you went on in the Service you changed yourself a great deal?

FREEMAN: The qualities you need are very different now. I hope I grew. You grow as you go along depending on your job.

Q: What do you think are the qualities in those times as distinct from now?

FREEMAN: I think money facilitates a lot of problems. We didn't have any money. I'm not saying that we were impoverished, but we had to live on the salary, and we always owed the — what was the name of that place you could borrow money from in the Department? The Credit Union. Our name was certainly there all the time, which was marvelous for us. I must say we really couldn't have gotten along without the help of the Credit Union.

So, you're living carefully, in new territory. You really can be taken advantage of when you don't speak the language well, and you don't know exactly what's required in this particular post. I think one of our biggest problems was that we were moved around so much in the beginning. It was very difficult. Then, of course, the war came and then when we separated and Tony had to live too so...

Q: Where did you go then?

FREEMAN: I couldn't go anywhere except to Tony's family. My father had died just before I left for Peking the first time... Do you want that first trip finished before we go into this?

Q: Yes, I do want to go back to that but I would very much like to hear what you have to say about this.

FREEMAN: I think one has to have an interest. The people who will fail, in my mind, are those who go with the attitude that there are only good Americans, and bad foreigners and even that they're called foreigners when they're living in their own land. Fortunately we don't have very many people like that, and certainly not in the Foreign Service, though I've run into people who were happier in some areas than in China, for example.

Q: How big was the embassy there? At that time — your first post there.

FREEMAN: Not very big. In 1940 things were very insecure. The Japanese came in in 1937 and so the Japanese were in control of Peking, and then the war came and [the embassy] moved to Nanking, then to Chungking, and stayed in Chungking during the war.

When we came back we were the first American family in the consulate in Peking in 1946, and I was there just about two months before Jean was born.

But to go back to that [first] trip. Going out the first time we went to Yokohama and were greeted by the Bonds and I took a ride with Julie leaving the baby on the ship. I think she had only been driving about a week and the Japanese drove on the right hand side and these military trucks were barreling down on us. And I just knew this was the end, and my baby was going to be without a mother. After that ride we went back to their house in the American consulate building and I said, “Well, I guess I'd better go home, get back to the ship, take care of my baby.” Everybody remonstrated but I went back, and then I fast learned that Tony never got on a ship unless the gangplank was dangling, in air, you know, that sort of thing. Oh, how many times people have wanted to put our children off on the dock when we hadn't yet arrived and the ship was waiting, ready to leave. But I learned that, so I usually went back first.

From there we went to Kobe and changed to another ship, a smaller ship; went through the Inland Sea and the Japanese took the three of us and put us in a room with no windows. Oh, they were nasty to us going through customs. They took away the diapers, they took away the baby food, they took away all our books. They gave them back to us when we went out, but I mean things were really bad at that point, in 1940, a whole year before the war. And all through the Inland Sea we could hear all the banzais as the soldiers were getting on or off boats but we didn't see the Inland Sea at all. I was very pleased to see the Inland Sea in 1981 finally.

We went to Dairen and the Chases [he was the Consul there] and I'll never forget her kindness because she knew my concern about leaving the baby at the hotel and coming to their house for dinner, and I just blessed that woman because I was beginning to think I was paranoid or something. But the scene was changing every minute. There's nobody that you know there. You can't even talk to people in their language. So it's a little hard to give up your baby to anybody. But Helga [Chase] said, “I'm going to send my personal

nursemaid who takes care of my children, and I can assure you that she will stay right there, and if there's any trouble she'll call us right away." And I said, "Why don't you let me get Midge to sleep because she'll sleep all night and I think everything will be fine." But I think since she was very much aware of the constant change, she didn't like to get out of my sight. (I remember my mother-in-law calling me a delinquent mother when I came home from all this because she said, "Well, I can't understand why she cries all the time.") So that was a wonderful introduction and I just never forgot her kindness, both of them.

Then we went on from Dairen, took a smaller boat. I stood there on the deck watching hundreds of people going into the hold — I knew the whole boat was going to turn over — then they shut the doors and we took off.

We finally got to Tientsin, and I was really quite homesick between reaching Yokohama and reaching Tientsin. But the minute I reached Tientsin I was perfectly at home. Couldn't understand anything, but I knew that this was finally where I was going to spend the rest of my life and everything went fine. I put my feet on Chinese soil and said, "This is it."

When we finally got to Peking there was some trouble about daylight saving time and nobody met us. We had fifty cases of food for the baby, and Tony got everything into rickshaws. The funny part of it is that he said, "Oh, I'll look it up in the phone book." Well, I looked at the phone book and it was all Chinese characters and he couldn't read it. That was so funny. I'll never forget that.

We didn't know where to go, so the rickshaw coolie took us to the American embassy and we rang the doorbell and Jane Johnson came running down those stairs — I can see her. It was a lovely looking residence — it had great wide stairs. She said, "Oh, you must be the Freemans," and opened up her arms and said, "It's wonderful to see you. We should have met you." But there'd been some mix-up. (I doubt if she would have gone to the station.) And I thought, "Well, if I'm ever going to be a good Foreign Service wife I think I'll emulate Jane Johnson [Mrs. Nelson Joshnson, whose interview is also in the Foreign

Service Spouse Oral History Project collection] and Helga." Everybody I'd met had been so kindly and so thoughtful and to me that seemed the most important thing. The first two nights we stayed in the embassy residence, and she said, "You don't have to come down for dinner at all. You can just stay with Midge and do whatever you want to. I'll send your dinner up because I know you're tired and I know you have to get kind of acclimated and after that we'll go from there." Her thoughtfulness. She's always been a marvelous lady. Absolutely.

Q: Where did you live in Peking the first time?

FREEMAN: In a place called San Kuan Miau. That was a Chinese compound not far from the main embassy compound. In the main embassy compound was a big house, the embassy residence, and three rather big houses which looked like old post offices built in 1900, about three stories high, and the office, the consulate. Lovely big green sward of grass.

Q: Did you have servants?

FREEMAN: Oh, yes. In the fall we moved into this Chinese compound: paper windows, paper — not glass. Cold. You were never warm on both sides. If you had your back to the fire you were burning and freezing. I think you could see your breath every morning. But there were stoves in every room and, of course, no problem at all. It was our wedding anniversary — had to be our second wedding anniversary. Tony told the Chinese boy that he'd like a very nice dinner as it was our wedding anniversary. I walked into that dining room — it had a silver candelabra; it had a lace tablecloth. I mean that dining room was the most gorgeous place I'd ever seen. We had the most elegant dinner from soup through partridge and all. And that was all borrowed from everybody in the compound. Our effects hadn't come. It just all appeared. And, of course, after we got our stuff that also went to dinners and parties, but one never lost anything. If somebody didn't have the proper cheese knife, why they found it, or whatever it was that they needed. It was fantastic. We

had a barren garden. It looked like a lot of these lawns in Georgetown do. Pieces of grass coming up, not lawn. There was a lovely moon gate, and there was some kind of rock path that went through, but it was just awfully ugly. Nobody had done anything about it for a long time. The morning of our wedding anniversary, I suppose, I got outside the front door when I was going out with the baby, probably after her bath, and earlier Tony had had it instantly planted with every kind of chrysanthemum. He'd seen the coolie out there with all these plants and he said, “Plant it.” To see that instant garden, I've never forgotten it.

Q: Was this in the center of the city?

FREEMAN: Well, it was within the Legation Quarter. It was not far from the city. I mean we could walk to the markets and everything; not that I ever went to the market in those days. It wasn't until '46 that I would. I knew enough Chinese by that time to go to the market. But I didn't ever go to the market for food shopping. The cook would never allow me to do it. He would have been so insulted! But I went because I wanted to see the things.

Q: Just to divert for a moment, how were the servants paid? Did you pay them?

FREEMAN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I guess if you were in the main compound the guards were pretty well taken care of by...but I'm not even sure of that. I know that we bought our own flowers and things. Our servants would do all the cleaning around outside.

Q: And you had somebody to take care of the baby if you needed or...

FREEMAN: Oh, I had an amah. We had a cook, a number one boy, a coolie who did nothing but the fires. I bet we had six servants even when we were making $2500 a year.

Q: Yes, this is one of the vast differences of course. Salaries in those days were, shall we say, minimal.

FREEMAN: By this time [Tony was] making $2700 because you did get raised in the beginning there. Of course, then you stayed at about $3000 for quite a while too.

Q: Of course. You were in [Peking] for a year at that time?

FREEMAN: No. Oh, no. Much shorter. We got there in late September, just before our anniversary, the 8th of October. Evacuation orders had already arrived, and the people on the next boat to China were taken off at Honolulu. I just got through the net, and for me it was marvelous because my idea of China was Charlie Chan movies and beautiful art pieces that came over on the clipper ships in New England. But between that...I really don't think I knew too much about China. And so they couldn't wait to get rid of me because already the women were packing to leave. But then the baby got very ill. I went to the crib one morning. The amah called me. She was a lively pink and white baby. Just blue, just nothing. So she went into the hospital, and she cried so much when I left her that they said I couldn't see her anymore. So I'd sit out in the hospital. I'd look through the crack in the door. It was terrible.

Q: What was the...

FREEMAN: Well, apparently paratyphoid. Where she got it I'll never know because I was so careful about boiling everything. Of course I think you can also boil too much. After she came home she had a relapse and she returned to the hospital. So we missed the first boat on account of her.

Q: Was this a Chinese hospital by the way?

FREEMAN: It was the Rockefeller Hospital.

Q: This was well established then in Peking?

FREEMAN: Yes. Do you know Penny [Johanson]?

Q: I met her, yes. I know all about her.

FREEMAN: She and her six-week-old baby Rolph and Midge and I sailed back home on New Year's Eve in 1941 together. And that started the long separation.

Q: How long were you then separated, and where was Tony?

FREEMAN: From New Year's Eve of 1941 he didn't come home until August of '42 — repatriated. They let him stay home three months and then they sent him back to Chungking for the rest of the war. Then he returned on the day the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima. He landed in San Francisco and went straight to a hospital.

Q: Of course I know Tony played the trombone, from the beginning, I assume. Where did he learn?

FREEMAN: He was a very musical person and he started cello at the age of three or four — a quarter-sized cello. All the people in Pasadena would see him going with his cello on a bicycle and they always expected it to get smashed at some point in going to his lessons. He decided at some point in high school that he needed to earn some money and he wasn't earning any money with a cello. I think he was in the symphony orchestra in Pasadena as a young person. He picked up a bass because they needed a bass in this little group. They opened supermarkets, opening night stand...floodlights...they always had music. Tony decided if he could find a group like that, he'd be earning money, so he bought a bass viol. He thought it was tuned exactly the same as the cello but, to his horror, he found it wasn't, and he had to really work hard to be ready in twenty-four hours for his first paid playing job. That's how he took up the bass, and it was a very good jazz instrument. His trombone, I think, he'd had from early on. I really don't know how young he was when he started the trombone, but that was his love — although his cello always remained a very basic part of Tony's life. He played in string quartets everywhere, played in the Peking Symphony Orchestra. He played with [Walter] McConaughy [many time U.S.

Ambassador and specialist in Far Eastern Affairs], who played clarinet or something — they played a lot together. Music meant a lot to Tony, and if he were depressed or needed to think about things, he'd turn on his symphonies.

Q: Your first assignment out of the War College had been Berlin.

FREEMAN: Well, let me go back a little bit. When everybody was getting his assignment — of course, the military got their assignments in January-February, and the Foreign Service Officers never got their assignments until the day before the school was ending. Although a few did, it dribbled along for those of the Foreign Service Officers. And every party that we had at the War College, after the assignments came out, people kept saying, “Well, where are you going? Haven't you heard yet?” So once I said, “Oh, haven't you heard, we're going to Rome?” And Tony said, “Oh, yes, haven't you heard, we're going to Rome.” Then we'd laugh heartily and nothing more was said about it. I think people had accepted the fact that we were going to Rome.

So, when the first, either spoken commitment came out of the State Department — whether it was written I'm not sure, I don't think it was written — I think Tony was told that he was going to Berlin. We were really quite deflated because we didn't know German; we had never had any. We couldn't find any real enthusiastic connection with this, and we knew it would be a hard place for the children — that sort of thing. And we might even have to anticipate more separation and we'd already had more than our share. So we accepted it and never thought anything about it. I wish I could think of who was assigned the head of the mission at that time. Anyway, they called us and they were so pleased. We'd had all this conversation and then we heard that we were going to Japan and we got all excited about that. Then the written notice came and it said Rome.

Q: How did you explain that?

FREEMAN: Tony and I decided that when the written paper came saying either Berlin or Tokyo, people said, “This is a mistake, they're going to Rome.” They'd heard it so often the papers probably went back into the mill.

Q: Oh, for days like that again.

FREEMAN: Well, who knows? We never figured it out. We were so tickled about going to Rome that, boy, we got ready and took off. We didn't want anybody to change his mind again.

Q: What about Italian? You said you didn't speak German. How about Italian?

FREEMAN: We didn't speak any Italian but at least we'd both studied Latin, and we knew some French. It just seemed much more — I mean Rome had such a ringing tone to it. I think Rome and Paris are two places you must see before you die! So it was very exciting.

Q: How long were you there finally?

FREEMAN: Five years. We got there in August of '50 — August 15 I think it was — summer vacation starts, everybody's gone, the streets were empty. Tony couldn't wait to get back to work — it'd been so long, the War College period, and so on. He was just like a stallion in the stable. He was ready to go. He literally dumped us on the street at our pension and rushed to the embassy. He was so excited. He came back the most dejected human being you ever saw. Well, Tommy Thompson [Hon. Llewellyn E. Thompson, Jr., later Career Ambassador] was DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] at the time, and Tony waited quite a while to get in to see him. It was a holiday but Tommy just happened to be in the office and Tommy never got out of his chair, and he said, “Oh, Freeman. Heard you were coming. Don't know what good you can do around here. You don't know Italian or anything about Europe or the problems.” (Being in China.) Tony couldn't believe it. I mean, the man didn't even shake his hand.

So Tony went to work and he knew Italian in jig time: far better than a lot of people who'd been there a longer time. And finally he was...within a very short time given better and better assignments. But to me this was very significant of the partitions in the Foreign Service. The European group didn't want anybody getting into their line of fire, taking over a good assignment. At least that was the feeling you definitely had in those days.

Q: During the time that you were in Rome, of course, Mrs. Luce was there.

FREEMAN: We had three wonderful ambassadors with us and three very different ones. We had James Dunn, who was one of our distinguished ambassadors. They were very formal, very frigid as far as the staff was concerned. For us it was a very large post. In Peking it was always small, and Mexico never seemed big when we were there. In SACLANT we were the only large fish in the pool and so Rome seemed like a pretty big office. This was after the war and so they were expanding. There were all those different organizations that were coming in under the embassy shield. But Dunn was just there a very short time and then I think he went to Spain as his last post.

Then Ellsworth Bunker [Hon. Ellsworth Bunker, though not a career Foreign Service Officer, held Ambassadorships to six countries and was twice Ambassador at Large] came and he was only there 11 months, 5 days, 6 hours. He gave the exact time when he gave his farewell, but those two came in there and tied up that embassy in little red ribbons and there wasn't anybody, any of us right down to the floor washer, that just didn't adore that couple. He had a marvelous ability of bringing us together as a family and I'm sure it's never happened before. The chancery, which was just a beautiful palace, was turned into the most fabulous farewell party for those people. It was incredible.

Q: Who arranged that?

FREEMAN: Well, the staff, DCM, I don't remember details but I mean the embassy desks were all moved out and it became a palazzo (palace). It was a fabulous evening.

Q: How did they do that? Was it the combination of the two of them together, or was it his personality?

FREEMAN: She was a very shy and sweet New Englander, and I think he just quietly smiled at all of us and said, “I know you'll give me your best,” and we sure did. It was the height of cooperation, I think. Of course, we felt he was being kicked out too, which was hard.

And so Mrs. Luce came, and that has some very interesting stories. What a beautiful woman she was. I have a marvelous letter from her that I've saved over the years because Tony got kicked out of Rome. His brother was coming over for a vacation. He'd just been divorced and he was very depressed. So we were planning this vacation to cheer him up. Tony was working on the military agreements — doing all the negotiating with Italy for our troops going through Livorno on up to Austria and in that area. And one treaty hadn't been signed, but everything had been agreed to. Mrs. Luce at that moment was going to the film festival in Venice. Tony went to Durby, Elbridge Durbrow [later, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam] and said, “Well, I can't go. Mrs. Luce said I can't leave.” And Durby said, “Don't be silly. It's going to be signed and there's just no reason for you to stay.” Of course Tony was very anxious to go and he knew he shouldn't have, but he went. Mrs. Luce found out about it and sent in a request for his transfer. I think she realized that she moved hastily, although Tony admitted that he should not have gone. So she sent me a dozen roses the night before we left with this letter which I will cherish always.

Q: What was the general idea of the letter?

FREEMAN: That she'd be visiting us someday in an embassy somewhere. She also called Tony every time she ever touched down in the United States terra firma, and it was quite funny, this whole aftermath. It wasn't much fun, I must say, but we'd been there five years and it was time to go anyway.

Q: And you went then more or less directly to Brussels.

FREEMAN: Oh, no. We came home to SACLANT, thanks to Mrs. Luce. That's why she always called whenever she came home. “Well, how are you doing? Do you like the job? I'll get you out of there, Tony.” She was a fascinating person.

Q: No question about that. What about Mr. Luce?

FREEMAN: He always sort of frightened me. He was always very stern and serious, and lots of times I'd have to sit beside him and I'd almost freeze.

Q: Was he there a lot?

FREEMAN: I would say so, yes. I think he adored her.

Q: You think he really played any role in her life as ambassador?

FREEMAN: Something, but you certainly weren't aware of it. I thought she was very courageous on many issues.

Q: She left, on the whole, an irreplaceable impression as far as the Italians were concerned, didn't she?

FREEMAN: They were furious at her for — well, mostly for saying that she had been poisoned. Tony firmly believed that she was allergic to the plaster droppings, and he says he knows that it was diagnosed that way, but Tony was very loyal. I'm not sure how I would stand on it, but the Italians didn't believe it at all.

Q: Well, it certainly must have been a lively time during the time that she was there.

FREEMAN: Oh, it was. Well, of course, being in Italy is such a fantastic opportunity — its history and beauty and...

Q: How did you ever find time to take advantage of being there, though; because it seems to me that...

FREEMAN: Early on we learned that we could go on a weekend trip and pick out a fourth class pension with the children. We knew how to carry our breakfast food with us and picnic food. We needed a meal a day, so we found that we could afford to do this and we'd just eat it up. One of our family projects was beginning on Monday to decide what we'd do after church on Sunday. Everybody got into the spirit of this thing down to the youngest child. There would be a choice of where we'd go and what we'd see. So we covered a lot of territory in five years.

Q: Yes, that would be possible for that length of time.

FREEMAN: It was so amazing because our eldest child — she was 15 in Rome — and one day I heard her — the children always came in and met people as all Foreign Service children did — I heard her say, “Well, my parents never take me anywhere.” And she had discovered Rome through her Latin teacher and her schoolmates. It was the most exciting thing you ever saw because then they began to go off in groups by themselves. But I was appalled to have my guests feel that Tony and I never did anything. That's part of growing up in a family.

Q: How was the schooling, generally, there or elsewhere? Were they in a local school?

FREEMAN: In the American School. While we were there the PTA was started and I was in on the beginnings of that. Then I helped organize the American Women's Club in Rome. I went to Mrs. Luce, asked her permission, and she said, “Yes.” Now that's one of the biggest Women's Clubs in Europe.

Q: Yes, I am aware that you were very active in Brussels. Of course, a number of years before...

FREEMAN: I don't remember doing anything in depth in the Women's Club in Brussels, but I did go.

Q: Yes, I remember that very well. The American Women's Club in Rome, for example, had many members of the business community, the resident community of Americans?

FREEMAN: Also Italians — starting out — because a lot of the Women's Clubs excluded the natives of the country and that was our main purpose, that this would be working together with the Italians.

Q: Did you do a great deal of good works in the course of the time you were there, whether in Rome, Brussels, Colombia and Mexico City, and so on? Do you have any recollection of being involved in lots of charitable activities and so on?

FREEMAN: Oh, yes. I worked very hard for the Nursery School in Colombia, and I helped with the organization of the Women Volunteers of Colombia.

Q: Was that a new concept as far as Colombia was concerned?

FREEMAN: As the national thing, and that's going very well now.

Q: Did the American community take a very active part in that kind of concept, in bringing that concept into reality? Or were there other nationalities that were involved with it, particularly Americans who were involved in these charitable activities?

FREEMAN: Yes.

Q: I was always interested in how that had come about; whether that was just a spontaneous thing that arose in individual places, or whether it was something that Americans generally carry with them, women particularly perhaps.

FREEMAN: Well, I think that for the Latin women, they do their little things through their church for the most part and that would sort of allow them in a limited way — a lot of them have huge families — I mean speaking about Spanish or French or Italian — and I always felt that going into these organizations was my one way of getting to know the country, getting to meet people of the country, and facilitating my knowledge of the language too.

Q: How did your Italian work out finally, starting from your...

FREEMAN: I've never been a good linguist, never. I think that — of course, we had to literally forget our Italian when we finally got to Colombia, but I'm sure each one of those learning processes helped me on the next one. Of course, I speak Spanish better than any other language that I've learned or that I've studied. But I always falter along. I also understood what was going on, and in Colombia I remember returning to Colombia with Tony after we'd retired, and all of my old friends got together for a tea party to see me, and they said, “My, your Spanish has improved so.” I thought I spoke wonderful Spanish when I was in Colombia, so my feelings were quite hurt!

Q: That leads me to another question I wanted to be sure to ask you. Were you and Tony perhaps unique in maintaining friendships with the people with whom you were associated in the country wherever you were, as well as with other nationalities, diplomatic groups?

FREEMAN: Well, I was terrible about keeping up things. It just got bigger and bigger and it got almost too much to handle. But we've kept up with a few.

Q: Do you find your associations with Americans become stronger over the years, those with whom you've shared, or is your life now on the West Coast so different and so exciting in itself as far as I can make it out to be, that...

FREEMAN: That's a difficult question. I think I would be very sad if I couldn't come back to Washington and see some old friends and talk to people who knew Tony. That's very important to me — being able to talk about Tony. My life in California was so short with

Tony, in a way, that that's kind of just another life. It's a nice life because it's a family life; my main interests are my children and my grandchildren, and that's giving me a great deal of pleasure. But to come back here and see all of you is part of my living. I think I will return. I have such a desire to live. I'm always grateful to anybody who stops in to see me in California, in Carmel.

Q: What about Foreign Service wives and their attributes: those marvelous qualities that we were starting to talk about yesterday? Certainly you said flexibility was...

FREEMAN: I think one of the joys of the Foreign Service is that each person is such an individual and there's so many kinds of good Foreign Service Officers, and probably what's great, at least in the past, which I think is probably diminishing now, is that we all worked as a team and as a group, and now with the separation of working wives, terrorist problems and that kind of thing, it must be harder to have the same kind of relaxed enjoyment of each person's best qualities. We can look for the bad qualities, but the best qualities, I think, are brought out in most of us.

Q: You've already given indication of a kind of instinctive sharing of experiences that must have been characteristic of not only a place like Peking but elsewhere as well in the days that you've described. No matter how large the embassy was.

FREEMAN: Well, I think it's amazing how any post — I'm sure that's even true today — is really overall controlled by the personality of the chief officer and/or his wife.

Q: Which reminds me, the Burdens [Hon. William A.M. Burdens, non-career Ambassador to Belgium when Fulton Freeman was Deputy Chief of Mission] were in Brussels when you were there and that must have been again a very happy experience as far as the relationship between you and them.

FREEMAN: I don't think it was ever very close. I was sure...I think that he distrusted Tony in a way in the beginning. Now whether he would have distrusted anybody or whether

he just distrusted Tony...but Tony had a hard time in the beginning working with him. Mr. Burden, of course, had always been a very independent person and Tony was finding out that he was going to Paris for dinner and staying for the week without even telling Tony. Those were hard times too... Tony would say, “Please, sir, just tell me when you're leaving the country.” But I don't think Mr. Burden thought of it as leaving the country, he was just going out for the weekend. I think Mrs. Burden is a lovely, lovely person.

If new Foreign Service wives could really sit down and decide the importance, for instance, of making a balance between their family and career — from the beginning, knowing that they won't be dragged off the path of this or put back on the path of that. I think I just grew up like Topsie in the Foreign Service and made certain rules for myself out of necessity. I never played bridge, for instance, in the afternoon, ever. I was home when the children came home unless it was a command performance.

Now I've asked the children — they're no longer children obviously — my girls, if they remember that I was home because I find that their recollections and my recollections are very different and they think of me as mostly being out. But I was there and obviously they brought home friends to play with and played with people in the building, but they don't remember my being there. So I'm not sure what's important, but I do feel that there are certain things you just have to say no to if you have a family at a certain period, and you shouldn't ever have a guilty conscience about it, nor should you be made to have a guilty conscience.

Q: No, I don't think so either.

FREEMAN: And I think that in the old days the Service, by gosh, came first.

Q: It always seemed to be so.

FREEMAN: ...seemed to be so. And I have often wondered in retrospect whether I just wasn't firm enough sometimes, although changing posts as often as we did, I refused to

go out for the first three or four or five days depending on the children's feelings of the instability and Tony had to go. I mean that was something I laid down. Now whether that was my own insecurity or not, who knows.

Q: I think that one had the impression that in the earlier days in the Foreign Service, which of course I had some taste myself, the ability of wives to choose what they would either contribute in the way of charitable activities or in terms of social activities, was very limited.

FREEMAN: I felt strongly by the time I got to Mexico, which was our last post, and many of the wives at that time didn't want to come to those wives' meetings which we had, and I felt very strongly that the wives' meetings had a use for those people who had trouble learning the language and getting outside of the group and needing the group. But I certainly do feel that anybody that didn't want to come should not be made to feel that she was being delinquent in her duty. A couple of wives came to me and said, “I really can't come; I'm going to university and taking courses,” — or doing this — and I said, “That's fantastic; you're widening the opportunity of our whole embassy.” And I said, for instance, to a couple of them that were going to the university, “Well, invite some of the students to the residence. Anytime you want to do something in the residence, it gives us a chance to get to know somebody else, and that's just as much a part of the job as anything else.” I encouraged people to go their own way. As far as making brownies, those [wives] have long since tired of that. At that point there was all the beginnings, I think, of a wives' thing: “Well, I deserve to be paid too.” I couldn't have agreed with them more in many ways, because my day began at 7:00 and usually ended at 1:00 the next morning. Especially without the children there I didn't have any excuses to do anything else.

Q: How were your days filled largely, in recollection?

FREEMAN: I started playing golf in Bogota and Mexico City because that gave me four hours out in the fresh air. I loved it for that. I'm not a sportswoman and never spent any time at it, but that to me was a marvelous release and I still enjoy it. The golf course is

always a beautiful place no matter what country it's in — peaceful, quiet. But my day started in the morning because we didn't have a chef, couldn't afford highly paid servants.

It's kind of an interesting story in Mexico because once we got there, Tom Mann had taken the cook home with him, and I said, “This is impossible — to come to a post this size and not have any help in getting the staff put together. I'm just not going to put up with a cook under these circumstances — of entertaining.” Well, we couldn't find a chef. In that particular time there was a great opening of all these restaurants. It was a kind of period of expansion and chi-chi restaurants. I mean if you'd paid a million dollars you couldn't have gotten a chef. So one day this little girl appeared and she had only cooked for a family of five and she had two girls, her husband had abandoned her, and she had a very determined look in her eyes, and she said, “I would like the job; I need it.” I said, “Well, it's going to be a hard job because I'll have to teach you and you're going to have to really do what I say.” So she started and she couldn't cook anything outside of tortillas, beans, very, very simple family food. For example, I tried to teach her how to make crepes and she wouldn't believe me that those crepes had to mature for a couple of hours before you cook them. I remember we had Ambassador [Robert Charles] Hill for lunch. It was the worst meal I've ever eaten. Hill had tried to get Tony out of the Service and it was almost as if I had tried to kill him. It was awful. I've never forgotten that meal. Anyway, as time went on, I said, “You're not going to get much chance here so that if you don't get to work...” I said, “I'll promise you that you will end up the highest paid cook in Mexico City if you do what I tell you to do.” When I returned to Mexico in 1976 or '77 she was leaving the American Embassy to go to one of the richest families at the highest salary.

Q: What a marvelous story. And you taught her.

FREEMAN: Well, I taught her a lot. I sent her to cooking school. I sent her down to Acapulco for a course in cooking. I really worked hard at it.

Q: Where did you learn to cook?

FREEMAN: I learned by reading the books.

Q: But that went beyond that, because really I can remember meals in Europe in your house, your home...Well, whatever it was, it was superb and I always had the feeling that it was somebody who had been taught by you.

FREEMAN: I never cooked growing up at all because I was brought up by housekeepers and they never wanted children in the kitchen, and then I was away at boarding school. But I just realized that you had to learn how to cook, and so I began collecting cook books and reading — that was my nightly reading for a long time — and the only reason I knew that you had to keep the batter of crepes for a while in the refrigerator was because I'd read it and could easily see how tough they were if you didn't do that. So that's how I learned.

Q: Plus, along the way you ate a lot of good food.

FREEMAN: That was right. After all, you spent a lot of time eating in the Foreign Service.

Q: I don't think that people realize that, how much time is spent around a table lifting a fork and knife.

FREEMAN: I know...lifted them too often, believe me.

Q: You had this kind of thing, you had lunches, as well as dinners, cocktail parties as well as receptions, all that sort of thing, of mingling with other personalities, other nationalities. That was constant as far as your life was concerned.

FREEMAN: We entertained 10,000 people a year in Mexico; that was recorded. And heaven knows how many other people dropped in. That's a lot of people. When I came home I wouldn't even go out; I'd had it. In a way I think that's why I haven't kept up with people.

Q: I think that even the most adaptive, gregarious come to a point where it's no longer...

FREEMAN: I think even Tony longed for the quiet of our home. Well, it's a great life...

[To go back to China] I got out there [Peking] and the only place was the Methodist Mission Hospital and there was no anesthesia. Nothing. I mean they didn't even have x-ray plates. It was really at the bottom of the pit. So I was lined up with all the Chinese ladies who were about to give birth. This was the first time Tony'd ever been around. The first child he didn't know he had for a week. He was in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. And this second child he didn't see until she was over two years old, and had forgotten what name we were going to give her. I never let him forget that.

And so the third is now being born in Peking in '45 and they never made a sound, these Chinese women, and if ever I let out a moan I'd say, “Oh, excuse me,” in Chinese. I held Tony's hand so hard that he couldn't move it for a week. And when I got into the delivery room they gave me a little piece of cotton with some chloroform on it. But that was a wonderful experience.

The biggest compliment that I ever got from Tony was shortly after the baby was born (we were supposed to have gone to a dinner party that night and, of course, I interrupted the schedule) but Tony went to the dinner party. So our hostess, who was quite an intellectual, chatted with me on the street shortly after this, and she said, “You know really Tony was such a bore the night your baby was born.” She said, “I never knew that every single subject could return to the birth of a baby.”

Q: Oh, I think that's lovely. Great compliment.

FREEMAN: I think that's wonderful.

Q: But you spoke yesterday about your good fortune in having a strong constitution.

FREEMAN: Like a horse. I never really got the intestinal things that most people had at some time or another. I was tough as an ox. That's a good attribute for the Foreign Service.

That was another thing I was thinking about — terrorism and evacuation. A lot of people think that's just going on today. It's worse today and it's a lot more obvious today, but this was going on in my early time of the Foreign Service, but it was never so widely spoken about because the media didn't have that and neither were there telegraphic connections that quickly.

But I can remember when the Mexican pilot crashed in the Potomac in 1940, or '39 I guess it was, and the Mexicans became very irate about this and there was a big demonstration because they felt that they'd been sabotaged on our part. The only thing we really owned in those days was that Ford touring car and Tony called me up and said, “Quick, come get it, it's in front of the consulate, because they're coming to demonstrate.” So I rushed down to get the car to rescue our only concrete possession. Then in '46-'47 we filled our bathtubs constantly with water: kept them filled, because the Communists surrounded Peking and at any time could cut off the water supply, electricity, and the trains were, of course, cut quite constantly between Tientsin and Peking.

Then one night President Lleras Camargo in Bogota called the house, personally, and got Jean on the phone and said, “Your father's in danger. Where is he? We've got to find him.” Well, that poor child never got over that. That was a terrible thing. She was fourteen or something like that, but she remembers that with just terror. But Tony, of course, would not take precautions. He said, “No, if the United States has to be represented somewhere, I'll be there.” So we had that kind of [thing]. At least you were beginning to live under clouds at that time.

When we went to Mexico, in 1964 during the Cuban Crisis, I was incarcerated in the house — by my own volition and Tony's — because they had secret service people, and if I went

out I had to be followed. I knew that was a ridiculous thing to do. Of course, I snuck out the back door once or twice because that feeling of incarceration is a terrible thing. I feel so sympathetic toward people who have to go through this crisis, all of mine being very minor, but I got a taste of it.

Then, of course, during the Olympics in Mexico, they put a telephone in my car and I was only to go on certain routes, and they wished that they had the money to give me a chauffeur but that wasn't possible...but I did have the use of a telephone. They'd call me and say there's demonstrators here, or don't go there, so that even at that time and all through our...had gone through certain things.

Then there were lots of demonstrations in Italy, pounding on our gates at the Palazzo Margarita, and I learned then that when we read about a demonstration there, that that demonstration is within a 5-block area. I think the thing about terrorism today is that you don't know whether the bomb is in your plane or your coat closet or something — but somehow terrorism in my day was confined to a small area and linked to destruction.

Q: Confined and defined...

FREEMAN: And you could always skirt the area. The Inspection Corps and because of the age of our children, well, I should regress a bit. I thought that if Tony took that assignment [in the Inspection Corps] then maybe we could afford to put our children in boarding school, but that was very naive of me, because when I looked into it I realized that it was a very expensive operation, and therefore quickly gave it up, and we had one child in college at that time. So, obviously, I had to stay here in the States, but I always felt that we'd had quite enough separation so I decided that...I'd always questioned whether I'd be able to take care of the children if anything ever happened to Tony. And he did get very ill in 1950 and I was really quite worried — and, of course, we went through the McCarthy period, and Tony and I said, “Well, at least we could pump gas in a gas station if we'd gotten let out of the Service.” It was kind of a family joke. But it was always in the back

of my mind. What would happen and could I do anything, because until you've passed a certain period in the Foreign Service you have no pension whatsoever and I suppose it would have been minimal if anything happened before those years had passed. So I was always fascinated to know if I had it in me to do anything. So I studied for the real estate exam (which seemed to be the only thing that I could do and be home with my girls when they came home from school). And I passed the real estate exam, sold one house, and then off I went to visit Tony.

Q: I hope it was a big house.

FREEMAN: No, it was a very tiny house. And that was another thing I didn't like; they always seem to show everybody big houses and not what they could afford, and this was a young Foreign Service Officer and his wife and they were just starting out. And so I tried to show them the kind of house that I felt they could start with and that was well built. I often wondered how long they kept it.

Oh, dear...the effect of the McCarthy period and how in a way it dogged Tony's path for so long. Even at the end he wanted to go back to the Far East. Part of his heart was always there, I think.

Q: I don't think people who didn't live through that period can imagine what the consequences were like for the people who were having to live through that, in terms of the psychological effect...the clouds that hung over so many people in that period.

FREEMAN: We took Jack Service out of a terrible hotel room, you know [John S. Service was one of the “China Hands” persecuted by Senator McCarthy.]. Had to walk up five flights. We made him come live with us. And that changed our life considerably because from that time on...Tony would always say, “Oh, they're friends of ours.” I'd say, “Tony, they are not friends of ours, they are acquaintances of ours.” I measured friendship by an entirely different balance after that. In a way I suppose I ended up with fewer friends than most people, but my definition of friendship became very, very purified. At one time you

could have counted our friends on less than a whole hand. Well, it was a terrifying thing — and frustrating.

Your interesting question was the coping with the isolation and removal from the United States mainstream while serving abroad. I found that very interesting when I came back from Peking in '48. People weren't ever really interested in what... They'd ask you one or two leading questions, but they hardly ever waited to hear the whole answer. I can remember feeling that I also had lost touch with what was going on and it made me much more aware that I should constantly keep certain reading up. But you have a tendency, one has a tendency I think, and I'm sure it's pretty widespread, that if you are in an isolated situation... In Peking we were cut off from the world to a certain extent; radio was our only contact and radios weren't awfully good, lots of static. In Rome, you had a much different situation. You could get European newspapers, American papers, so that your world opens up.

Q: And I suppose there were many Americans who came and, of course, whom you saw in quantity I'm sure.

FREEMAN: And we had fascinating evenings. Mrs. Luce was marvelous at that...anytime anybody came through. We met Tom Dewey and Harriman — the whole spectrum — and marvelous conversation. The wives were allowed to come...but not to open their mouths. But it was fascinating; I didn't mind at all just being the fly on the wall because we learned a lot.

But think of the number of posts in our Foreign Service that are isolated — even in this day and age. I imagine this would be true in Africa, and certainly lots of places in Latin America. So there is a certain coping with isolation that I don't think is talked about enough.

I don't think that holidays abroad are that bad. You quickly have a family of one kind or another — foreign students, Peace Corps people. We always had a big table at

Thanksgiving and Christmas that included all kinds of people and we started singing, caroling, in hospitals beginning in China when the children were very small and always did it.

Q: All the family or gathering of people?

FREEMAN: Gathering people together to do it. Well, to me the holidays mean family but it isn't necessarily near family. It means international — and I never felt lonely I must say.

Q: One of the characterizations that has struck me so forcibly — reading descriptions of Foreign Service life, for example. I don't know whether you're familiar with a book called Diplomat by Charles Thayer [Charles W. Thayer, Diplomat, New York, Harper Brothers, 1959]. It's about American diplomats primarily, although it's a description of diplomatic life in general. I was struck by the fact that the only word that he used to describe wives was "boredom," and I was the more struck by it when you said yesterday that you thought that having an interest in what was going on around you was the most important thing that you could think of as being an attribute of Foreign Service wives. He was referring to, I think, the period of the fifties and his description of life in the Foreign Service at that time included the fact that one of the reasons there were so many parties was that wives needed to be diverted.

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Talk given by Phyllis Freeman to Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity (sic) at the Monterrey Country Club, Pebble Beach, California. The date was probably 1984.

It is almost forty-five years ago that I began that great experience on the coattails of a fascinating man who was full of life and spirit, who wished to investigate every nook and cranny of the world around him and to experience to the fullest the advances and changes of our time and to be a part of them.

“From Mexico to Mexico in 25 years” should be the title, for that was both our first and last post. It was exciting, overwhelming, terrifying, challenging, and never-ending in its variations. From a sleepy giant which was Mexico in 1938, the glamor and strangeness of China, the ageless beauty and exuberance of Italy, the sophistication and stolidity of Belgium, the simplicity and hardship of living in the magnificence of nature-in-the-raw of Colombia, and back again to the dignity and pride of a great culture living in Uncle Sam's shadow — a country of contrasts, Mexico. In between these assignments there was always Washington, which in itself will always fascinate me.

We drove from Washington to Mexico City in early 1939 in a right-hand-drive touring car with our few goods and chattels in a swivel wheel trailer. In order to receive the few cents a mile allowed in those days we had to complete 350 miles per day. Now that's a morning drive, I can assure you that then it was not. Often we had motor or tire trouble and then had to drive long into the night to keep our schedule. If any of you have driven on the improved road from Tomasncharlie to the Mexican plateau in the daytime, you may have been as overcome as I when, 25 years later, I saw what we had done in the dark of night and fog.

Because of my uncertain health during my first pregnancy I flew to Los Angeles, on an unpressurized plane, in my eighth month. At that time the new codes were being distributed to the Consulates. Since I was to land at towns where we had posts I was given the duty of delivering them in person to the Consulate. By this time war had started in Europe, our old codes now broken. My mission was the 1939 version of carrying around the secrets of the atomic bomb. Imagine letting a pregnant wife carry secrets in our world today! Our couriers go with locked cases chained to their wrists.

The day our daughter was six weeks old I flew back to Mexico with her, the first time alone with my child and without the advice of my mother-in-law. We hit bad weather and the pilot came out of the cockpit to tell me that he would fly as low as possible to insure the safety of the baby and the passengers — if I would “keep her asleep, it would be better,” he said.

I froze with Midge asleep on my shoulder. Everyone was very ill from lack of oxygen but I had risen to the cares of motherhood. On landing, my husband's greeting was that he had heard of people turning green but that he had never seen one before.

Our first violence came at this time. Sarabia, the pride of Mexico's air force, had flown to Washington and on landing had missed the tarmac and drowned in the Potomac. There were headlines and cries of sabotage and angry crowds marching on the embassy. Our only possession, aside from our wedding presents, was our car and it was parked at the embassy. I got a call from Tony to please come quickly to rescue it. He was busy with the rest of the staff securing the embassy. I tell you this story because we think of violence as an aspect of today's world, not inherent in those days. Now news travels faster, crowds are bigger — there are a lot more of us on this planet — and the Foreign Service has always known that we were expendable. The Senate decreed a long time ago that the family of a Foreign Service Officer went at his pleasure to a post, not the pleasure of the government. This is a little-known fact until one comes up against IRS in a deduction for broken furniture or a complete loss of one's effects.

On to China then, where my husband's dream was to be a specialist in the area and the language. Our first greeting at the station in Peking was, “Too bad you've come such a long way to turn around to go home again.” Evacuation orders for all unnecessary personnel had arrived. Three months later, after two bouts of paratyphoid and having the baby turn blue from overdosages of sulfa (the miracle drug which saved so many of our soldiers in the war), we were ready to try again to catch a boat from Shanghai to San Francisco.

For two or three days I had not been well but I was afraid that if I missed another boat it would be bad for Tony's record — difficult family! However, as time neared to leave for the boat I became alarmed at my symptoms so I took a rickshaw to the hospital to find out just what was the matter. The emergency bells clanged and a doctor, who by then had me on the operating table, was glowering down at me saying, “Didn't you realize that if you tried

to get on the boat you would be dead?" I said, "But no one knows I'm here. No one else knows my baby's formula." Giving the baby's formula was the last thing I remembered for some time. I awoke to the chattering of a Chinese girl who was delighted to have a captive student of Chinese. I shall never forget those ten days. Midge and I finally sailed home on New Year's Eve of 1941.

Tony was incarcerated on December 7 by the Japanese, who were then in control of North China. After 28 months of separation, he was repatriated. After four months at home he was sent back to Chungking. He returned to the U.S. on the day the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima. We were, of course, going to have a few luxurious days to ourselves before I introduced him to his daughters. We had reservations at La Playa, Carmel, California.

I shall never forget the kindnesses of the staff there. Tony became very ill. Six feet tall, he had come home weighing 130 pounds. The staff helped me bed him down in the back of the car and I drove him from Carmel to the Pasadena hospital where he remained for three weeks. He met Carol, our second daughter, for the first time when she was over two years old. I had driven myself to the hospital in Pasadena in the middle of the night for her birth.

After a short time in Washington we headed back to Peking once more. We had to find our own transportation and it took weeks, through the War Shipping Board, to find a boat. We finally left on a tanker loaded with aviation gas. That trip is a story unto itself. It was written up by a Chilean who was on his way to Shanghai as consul and to practice medicine. He saved my third daughter by giving me confidence, since there was no doctor on board the ship. I realized that I should not have put into jeopardy the lives of two young children and one unborn child, but I had had enough of separation! Jean was born five months later in a Chinese hospital where the only medication was a piece of cotton with a drop of ether. Not a sound from the Chinese ladies in the same condition, so I upheld the honor of the United States and practically drank in the cotton.

Two years later: returning home a few months before all the Americans left China we had three years in Washington, where the strain of McCarthyism and the uncertainty of losing one's head the next day was a period of heartache for our friends and for us. We, the China service, had “lost China.”

Then we were assigned to Rome, and the rest of Tony's career really pivoted at this moment on the fact that C. B. Luce was sent to Italy to be our Ambassador. She could not understand why Tony was not promoted. She found him to be a loyal American, a fine Foreign Service Officer, and sent a telegram to Ike telling him just that. It was a lucky day for us, but a lot of our friends were scarred for life.

From there it was SACLANT as Political Advisor, to Belgium as Deputy Chief of Mission, and the crowning ambition of any Foreign Service Officer — as Ambassador to a Class Two post, Colombia, in 1961. I must admit to you now, although I would not have been so candid years ago, that we were not quite sure just where in South America Colombia was. But after we lived there, Colombia became and always will be a special place to us and our family. The excitement of Latin America and John Kennedy — the Peace Corps, where the very first group arrived — the feeling that, at last, South America was being thought important to the USA, a genuine interest.

The fervor of Kennedy's visit to Bogota is hard to describe without superlatives. Over a million people lined the streets. Unfortunately the President had a fever by the time he arrived from Venezuela, and President Lleras Camargo — one of the world's great statesmen, by the way — insisted that the schedule be cut to save the President's energies. We had a six-hour lunch in the Presidential Palace with the two presidents, their wives, the Colombian Ambassador to the United States and his wife and ourselves. I can assure you John Kennedy made me proud he was our President. He was impressive in his intelligence, his humor and his understanding of problems.

One bit of trivia: I felt I did not have sheets of presidential quality — they were to take over our bedroom — so I asked Tish Baldridge (now the Emily Post of today) to please send me a pair of sheets which Jackie would feel comfortable sleeping on. They arrived posthaste. The bill was $95.00.

John Kennedy's death put a pall over Colombia for months. It was real; they had lost a very close friend. The night he was killed we received people at the embassy until three in the morning. The lines of people to sign the book were endless day after day and made up of all kinds of people from many walks of life, from cathedrals to small parishes in the hinterland.

In March, 1964, we were assigned to Mexico. We were excited of course, it was a challenge we hadn't dared dream of. At the same time we hated leaving Colombia. We had made many real friends, who are still special in my life today. Mexico is very different from Colombia, its problems more sophisticated, more complicated, the position of the American Ambassador delicate.

So with trepidation but happy memories of that first trip years ago, we drove in a Lincoln Continental convertible over the same route, shadowed from the border by the Mexican police. If we stopped to look at a view, they stopped to ask if we were all right, did we need something? And so we arrived — at the biggest U.S. embassy in the world — to the visit of the Dutch Queen, the visit of Prince Philip, the Cuban Missile Crisis, three Presidential visits, and one vice-presidential visit when Mr. Humphrey entertained the Mexican President in our embassy — the first time a Mexican President had set foot on American territory in Mexico; two family weddings (one of which almost ended in tragedy), my husband's heart attack, the Olympics, and a bombing. By the end of our five years we had entertained 50,000 people. One of my biggest jobs was to find an appropriate new residence, the one in the Zona Rosa long ago having worn out its usefulness. I am sure some of you have visited the new residence. I think it is functional as well as beautiful.

Interlaced through the years were the problems of running a house in a foreign language. Servants become family and their problems become yours. With 14 servants in Mexico, each having a large family, it took part of my time every day. There were illnesses, accidents and problems that even “the soaps” “One Day at a Time” or “As the World Turns” couldn't dream up.

And there were projects — charity work, raising funds, teas, coffees, meetings, menu planning, guest lists, table seatings, flower arranging, clothes planning, protocol. Fortunately the children have grown up before one reaches these demands, but one has to plan family life in the Foreign Service. This makes for special moments, special days, and special vacations, such as, I'm sure, working parents have to achieve today.

As we lived on three continents, mores and folkways changed; the markets and the menus. People laugh at protocol but protocol is a way of living with different peoples. It gives everyone the same base from which to proceed, it simplifies our lives and gives us a framework we all understand. Formal calls, for example, give us a chance to make our first contacts in the new city.

Recently in Washington, Ambassador [Paul] Boeker, then head of the Foreign Service Institute, told me they are having trouble filling the jobs abroad. Wives are staying home while their husbands go to post. He said, “Somehow we will have to compensate the Foreign Service wife.” That certainly is a new world hard for me to understand, for I had the best job and the great opportunity of working alongside my husband for 30 years!

During those years we had the opportunity to meet important people, always appealing. We began with the Roosevelts — Eleanor Roosevelt will ever remain at the top of my life, a magnificent lady. We met Congressmen, Senators, writers, actors, musicians — and in the latter category I think Tony, a bass and trombone player, would put Satchmo and Duke Ellington and Herb Alpert at the top of his list.

To mention only a few by name: Adlai Stevenson, Archibald and Ada MacLeish, Walt Disney, Robert Kennedy, Helen Hayes, Dolores Del Rio, Joan Crawford. There were many more. The great ones stand out as warm, loving and considerate. The others were only momentarily important.

Thank you for your interest. THE END

***BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: H. Fulton Freeman

Spouse entered Service:March 7, 193Left Service: January 6, 1969You entered Service:SameLeft Service: Same

Status:Widow of former Ambassador

Posts: 1939Mexico City, DF, Mexico 1940Foreign Service School 1940 1940Beijing, China 1942Department of State, Washington, DC 1942University of Califomia, detailed for special study 1943Chunking, China 1945Department of State, Washington, DC 1945Beijing, China 1948Department of State, Washington, DC, Assistant Chief, Division of Chinese Affairs 1950National War College 1951Rome, Italy 1955Norfolk, Virginis, PolAdvisor SACLANT 1958Department of State, Washington, DC, FS Inspector 1958DCM Brussels, Belgium 1961AEP Bogota, Colombia 1964AEP Mexico, DF

Place and Date of Birth: April 19, 1915

Parents:

Guy Hebard Eaton, Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass.

Marian Sabra Cole

Schools: Bradford Academy; St. Lawrence College, Canton, NY

Date/place of marriage: Pasadena, California, 1938

Children:

Margery Ellen

Carol Larkin

Jean Olts

Volunteer and Paid Positions held: A. At Post: B. In Washington, DC: National Board of Girl Scouts